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GOVERNMENT MORALS

NEW YORK CITY.

SIR,—Would it not be interesting to the readers of your journal, and instructive in the present general discussion of subjects covered by the most recent Presidential “message,” for you to develop this topic, with your great editorial art and command of facts, into a comprehensive article?

The (Federal) Government, considered concretely and apart from any partisan or “administration” aspect, regards itself as the regulator of the morals, business and private, of its citizens, as shown by its conduct of proceedings under the Sherman and other laws of business, and the White Slave act in respect to private morals. Especially as to business ethics, it is seeking to extend its powers of interference, repression, and regulation by arrogating to itself plenary power over issues of securities by railroads, over all the activities of banking and industrial enterprises, to the end that the Government may have veto power over every act of private business and every relation of those that control them. Is the morality of the Government’s conduct in its relations with its citizens, private and corporate, such as to commend it as a censor of business or private ethics?

Witness the details of the mail-weighting test that took place in the fall of 1912, preparatory to the inauguration of the “parcels post” system, the purpose of which was to show a profit in the Post-office Department and let the loss fall on the carriers, and the practical effect was to compel the railroads to carry without compensation most of the packages of the nation; that is, the traffic for which the railroads would otherwise have received adequate pay from the express companies they now have to conduct for nothing. Witness, further, the enlargement of that system from eleven to twenty pounds, then to fifty pounds maximum per package, without legal warrant other than executive fiat based upon the power to regulate the carrying out of the law, but which correspondingly increased the burden of the railroads. Had a “trust” been guilty of like conduct in respect of its commercial rivals, what dire penalties of fine and imprisonment would have been invoked by a “righteous” government in relief of the oppressed and in response to outraged public sentiment!

Witness the history of the French Spoliation claims, *after* the receipt of full payment by the United States on behalf of its citizens. Similar conduct by an individual toward those entitled to satisfaction of their claims would be termed “fraud,” “embezzlement,” or the like, and would be treated as such, by indictment and prosecution upon the procurement of the same benevolent government.

Witness the enactment of pronounced class legislation of pernicious tendency, such as the multiple taxation of industry and thrift under the name of “Income Tax”; or such as the rider in one of the recent appropriation bills, exempting labor-unions and farmers’ alliances from a specific enforcement of the “anti-trust” law, now urged as a “precedent” for a general enactment of similar tenor.

Many like instances will doubtless be developed in your fertile mind, without necessarily trenching upon the domain of international affairs—*e. g.*, the situation between the United States and Colombia that led to the Republic of Panama, or the relation of Panama Canal tolls to treaty-rights with other nations—and which will tend, perhaps, to support the view that the business dealings of the Government entitle it to be regarded as the arbiter of private morals only in the sense of “setting a thief to catch a

thief." But a position so extreme would perhaps be inadvisable in an article tending to point out the danger of so great extension of governmental powers, and the futility of attempting to effectuate the moral code by administrative processes. "JUNIUS."

[We quite agree that the edict of the Postmaster-General increasing the weight of parcels-post packages had no warrant in equity or in law. We believe further that resistance by the railway companies would have been justifiable and successful. . . . It is the intention of the present Administration, we understand and hope, to right the wrong inflicted upon Colombia by President Roosevelt.—EDITOR.]

THE FALSE STEP

JOLIET, ILLINOIS.

SIR,—In the November number of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* you criticized the Administration on account of its responsibility for the "rider" attached to the Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill passed at the last session of Congress, and which exempts organizations of farmers from prosecution under the Sherman Anti-trust Law. The basis of your criticism is that this is class legislation. Your conclusion is undoubtedly correct. In fact, it would seem that it is, as was said by Mr. Taft in his veto of an appropriation bill containing a similar rider, "class legislation of the most vicious sort."

Now, I wish to refer you to an article by Hon. David Jayne Hill, which appeared in the December *REVIEW*, and wherein it is said:

"The division of men into friends and enemies of Constitutional Government must be based upon the attitude they assume toward its fundamental principle. This principle being the existence of equal and adequate guarantees, by which the life, the personal liberty, and the property of every citizen are rendered inviolate, every person and every organization that aims to secure advantages to the detriment of others must be classed as an enemy to Constitutional Government."

Mr. Hill, of course, states a truism, and the action of the Administration, as described by you, is a matter of common knowledge. How, then, can one escape the apparently logical conclusion that the Administration is not qualified for membership in that class known as the friends of Constitutional Government? Your assistance in affecting such an escape will be greatly appreciated.

DORRANCE DIBELL SNAPP.

[One error does not constitute irremediable sin.—EDITOR.]

MATTERS OF OPINION

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.

SIR,—You question the legal and moral right of the President of the United States to say who shall be President of Mexico. This is truly a matter of question, so far as the legal right is concerned, but, so far as the moral right, it is not open for question with any self-respecting nation with a full knowledge of facts and considering that commercial and material matters should not dominate the moral question. Europe was not at all interested in the moral side, only in the material side, so recognized Huerta. As one renegade American located in the City of Mexico very aptly states, "little they cared if Mexico had a democracy or not," and they